INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ORGANIZING PATRIOTIC EDUCATION IN PRESCHOOL SETTINGS

Abduqaxxarova Oyjahon
Methodologist at Preschool Educational Organization No. 21 under the Department of Preschool and School Education of Norin District
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ABSTRACT. This article examines innovative approaches to patriotic education in preschool institutions. It analyses the potential of play-based learning, the project method, digital storytelling, virtual tours, problem scenarios, and collaborative learning to foster children's love for their homeland, respect for national values, and sense of social belonging. Drawing on cultural-historical, experiential, axiological, and child-centered perspectives, the article proposes a four-stage sequence - awareness, emotional engagement, purposeful action, and reflection - and identifies age appropriateness, meaningful participation, family partnership, and reflective assessment as key conditions for effective practice.

Keywords: preschool education, patriotic education, innovative approach, national values, play-based learning, project method, digital storytelling, virtual tour, collaboration.

INTRODUCTION. Patriotism is an important moral and civic quality that encompasses love for one's homeland, respect for its history, natural environment, language, and cultural heritage, as well as a sense of responsibility for the interests of society. This feeling does not arise fully formed; rather, it develops gradually under the influence of the family, the educational environment, social relationships, and personal experience. Because preschool children are highly receptive emotionally, inclined to learn through imitation, and naturally curious about their surroundings, the preschool years provide particularly favorable pedagogical conditions for laying the foundations of patriotic education.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan On Preschool Education and Upbringing identifies the comprehensive intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and physical development of children as one of the principal objectives of preschool education. The Law also emphasizes the unity of the educational influence of the family and the preschool institution, an individualized approach to each child, and the introduction of modern innovative and information and communication technologies [1]. These requirements call for patriotic education to extend beyond traditional conversations and ceremonial events and to be organized through pedagogical approaches that engage the child as an active participant.

At preschool age, a child's understanding of the homeland begins with ideas that are close and accessible: family, home, the mahalla, the native language, national traditions, the natural environment, and historical monuments. Consequently, patriotic education should prioritize cultivating a sense of belonging in the child's everyday experience rather than conveying complex political or historical information. M. Quronov interprets national education as a holistic pedagogical process that develops national self-awareness, historical memory, and respect for spiritual and moral values in the younger generation [2]. This perspective highlights the need to align nationally grounded content in preschool education with activities that reflect children's age, interests, and needs.

Play-based learning is one of the most effective innovative approaches to patriotic education. Play is the leading form of activity in preschool childhood: through it, children internalize social relationships, assume different roles, and experience the consequences of their actions. A methodological publication

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prepared by UNICEF characterizes play as an essential means of developing children's understanding of their environment, imagination, creativity, communication, and socio-emotional skills [3].

Through role-play activities such as A Tourist Comes to Visit, Young Nature Protector, Caring for Our Mahalla, and Museum Guide, children learn to treat national culture, nature, and public property with care through practical action. In A Tourist Comes to Visit, for example, children select local places of interest, provide brief information about them, and demonstrate appropriate ways of welcoming a guest. In this process, knowledge about the homeland is integrated with verbal participation, a culture of communication, and national pride.

The project method enables children to explore their immediate social and cultural environment systematically. In small-scale projects such as My Mahalla, A Treasured Family Memory, The Nature of Uzbekistan, and Traditional Crafts, children collect information with their parents' assistance, select photographs, prepare creative work or a model, and present the outcome to their peers. In project-based activity, the educator moves from being a transmitter of ready-made information to becoming a pedagogical facilitator who organizes children's inquiry and collaboration.

The didactic value of the project method lies in its capacity to integrate different areas of development around a common educational objective. In the My Mahalla project, for instance, children develop spatial and mathematical understanding by arranging objects, language skills by describing them, creativity by constructing a model of the mahalla, and socio-communicative skills by dividing tasks among peers. Most importantly, children begin to perceive the mahalla not merely as a place of residence but as a shared social space whose protection and improvement also depend on their participation.

Digital storytelling provides a contemporary means of expressing family memory, national values, and cultural heritage within patriotic education. A study conducted by N. Mikelic Preradovic, G. Lesin, and D. Boras found that digital storytelling can increase preschool children's interest, motivation, and active participation [4]. This approach combines images, the child's recorded voice, music, and brief text. Creating short digital stories on topics such as A Story My Grandmother Told Me, My Favorite Landscape in Uzbekistan, or An Exemplary Person in Our Mahalla enables children to express their ideas and feelings independently.

The educational value of these approaches can be clarified through cultural-historical and experiential theories of learning. L. S. Vygotsky argued that higher psychological functions first emerge in social interaction and are subsequently internalized by the child [5]. From this standpoint, patriotic values are not acquired simply by hearing definitions; they take shape when children participate with adults and peers in culturally meaningful activity. Jointly preparing a display about the mahalla, caring for a garden, listening to a family story, or discussing the protection of a local monument provides the social context in which belonging, respect, and responsibility can be experienced. The educator's role is to provide appropriate guidance and gradually transfer initiative to the child. This process prevents patriotic education from becoming a one-way transmission of slogans and turns it into a supported transition from shared action to personal conviction.

John Dewey's concept of education through experience further explains why practical participation is indispensable. Dewey viewed meaningful learning as the reconstruction of experience rather than the passive reception of information [6]. In preschool patriotic education, a fact about the homeland therefore gains educational significance when it is connected with something the child observes, creates, discusses, or protects. A conversation about the beauty of the homeland can be followed by caring for plants in the preschool grounds; an introduction to traditional crafts can lead to a child-designed ornament; and a discussion of community life can culminate in a collaborative model of the neighborhood. Such

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continuity between knowledge and action enables children to see national values as principles that guide everyday conduct rather than as ceremonial content reserved for particular dates.

Patriotic education should also be compatible with respect for cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence. UNESCO's framework for global citizenship education emphasizes that learning begins in early childhood and should develop respect, empathy, responsibility, and the ability to live constructively with others [7]. Accordingly, love for one's own country should not be presented through comparison that diminishes other peoples or cultures. In a multilingual and multicultural learning environment, children can explore the traditions represented in their group, identify shared values, and recognize that care for Uzbekistan includes respect for all citizens. This orientation distinguishes constructive patriotism from exclusionary attitudes: national identity is strengthened through informed attachment to one's heritage while remaining open to dialogue, cooperation, and universal human dignity.

A coherent instructional sequence is needed to integrate innovative approaches into everyday practice. The proposed sequence comprises four interconnected stages: awareness, emotional engagement, purposeful action, and reflection. First, the educator activates children's prior experience and introduces a local place, symbol, person, custom, or environmental feature through objects, images, stories, or guided observation. Literature, music, family memories, dramatization, and encounters with community members then encourage emotional engagement. Children subsequently complete a meaningful task, such as creating a model, caring for a shared space, preparing a digital story, or organizing a group display. Reflection invites them to explain what they learned, how the activity made them feel, and what they can do in the future. The stages are cyclical and may be revisited as understanding deepens.

The selection of technology should be governed by pedagogical purpose rather than novelty. An approach is appropriate when it is developmentally suitable, encourages children's initiative, connects with authentic cultural content, includes every child, and leads to an observable educational outcome. For example, a virtual tour is justified when direct access to a museum or historical site is impossible and when the viewing is organized around questions, discussion, and a subsequent creative task. Digital storytelling is appropriate when children participate in selecting images and constructing the narrative rather than merely watching a finished presentation. Similarly, a project should remain manageable in scope and should produce a result that children understand. These criteria allow educators to distinguish meaningful innovation from the decorative use of technology.

Virtual tours allow children to become visually acquainted with Uzbekistan's historic cities, museums, nature reserves, and cultural monuments. A virtual tour, however, should not be reduced to simply showing a video. The educator should stimulate observation, thinking, and emotional engagement through questions such as "Which object tells us about the way our ancestors lived?", "Why should this monument be preserved?", and "Which landscape did you like most?" After the tour, drawing an impression, constructing a model of a monument, or engaging in role-play helps transform the information received into personal experience.

Problem scenarios develop children's moral decision-making and social responsibility. By discussing scenarios such as Flowers in the Garden Have Been Trampled, A Historical Artifact Was Handled Carelessly, or The Group Room Was Left Untidy, children learn to understand the causes and consequences of actions. Instead of imposing a predetermined judgment, the educator guides children toward finding a solution together. As a result, love for the homeland is expressed through concrete actions, including caring for shared spaces, respecting others, and contributing to the community.

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Collaborative learning reveals the social dimension of patriotic education. Working in small groups to create a model of the mahalla, a composition based on national ornament, a map of Uzbekistan, or a collective display develops children's ability to distribute tasks, listen to one another, and take responsibility for a shared outcome. Such activities must take account of each child's abilities and individual needs. A sense of patriotism acquires genuine social meaning when the experience of I develops into the experience of we.

Cooperation between the family and the preschool institution is an essential pedagogical condition for using innovative approaches. Parents can contribute to the educational process by providing family photographs, examples of traditional objects and crafts, information about occupations, and accounts of the history of the mahalla. Such assignments, however, should be accessible and understandable to all families and should not require unnecessary financial expenditure.

The outcomes of patriotic education cannot be assessed adequately only by the poems a child has memorized or by the ability to name state symbols. Assessment should also consider children's understanding of their homeland, interest in national values, responsible attitudes toward the natural environment and shared property, participation in collective activities, and ability to express their impressions. It is therefore advisable to assess progress through observation in authentic activity contexts, creative work, conversations, and children's portfolios.

CONCLUSION. Organizing patriotic education in preschool settings through innovative approaches moves children's love for their homeland beyond the level of ready-made information or slogans and transforms it into personal commitment and practical action. Play-based learning enables children to experience social roles; the project method supports the systematic exploration of their immediate environment; digital storytelling allows family and national memory to be expressed in the child's own voice; virtual tours promote a visual understanding of cultural heritage; and problem-based and collaborative activities foster responsibility and social belonging. When these approaches are aligned with children's developmental characteristics, interests, and everyday experiences, the pedagogical effectiveness of patriotic education is enhanced.

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